

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

S E C R E T STATE 083895

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 083895 ACTION PHNOM PENH, INFO ALGIERS,
BANGKOK, BELGRADE, BUCHAREST, MOSCOW, NOUAKCHOTT, PARIS,
PEKING, USUN NY, YAOUNDE, CINCPAC, COMUSSAG 24 APRIL 1974.

QUOTE:

S E C R E T STATE 083895

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PINT, PFOR, PINS, CB (KHIEU SAMPHAN)

SUBJECT:EMERGENCE OF KHMER INSURGENT LEADER KHIEU SAMPHAN
ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

REFERENCE: PHNOM PENH 5593

1. WE VERY MUCH AGREE WITH THE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT THAT
THE PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT TRAVEL OF KHIEU SAMPHAN IS TO
GIVE HIM INTERNATIONAL STATURE. WE AGREE THAT POINTS IN
PARA 6 OF THE REF ARE USEFUL TO MAKE. IT IS NO ACCIDENT
THAT SIX MONTHS AGO SIHANOUK'S PEKING "GOVERNMENT" WAS
DOWNGRADED BY TRANSFERRING ALL OF THE PORTFOLIOS TO KNOWN
COMMUNIST IN-COUNTRY INSURGENTS. THIS IS POSSIBLY
AN EFFORT TO MAKE SURE THAT SIHANOUK IS NOT PLACED IN A
POSITION WHERE HE COULD BE IMPOSED ON THE INSURGENCY BY
SOME GREAT POWER AGREEMENT A LA LAOS CIRCA 1962. SIHANOUK,

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AS THE EMBASSY HAS OBSERVED, IS CORDIALLY DESPISED BY THE

MARXISTS WHO ALSO CONTROL THE INSURGENCY. THE INSURGENTS WILL CERTAINLY NOT SHORTLY FORGET SIHANOUK'S PERSECUTION OF THE COMMUNISTS IN THE PAST AND HIS COMMENT IN 1967 DURING THE SUPPRESSION OF THE PEASANT REBELLION IN WESTERN CAMBODIA THAT HE "HAD A THOUSAND PEOPLE KILLED AND DIDN'T LOSE A NIGHT'S SLEEP".

2. MOST OF THE KHMER ELITE, AS THE EMBASSY HAS NOTED, BELIEVE THAT KHIEU SAMPHAN AND HIS FELLOW TRAVELLERS HU NIM AND HOU YUON, WERE NOT IN FACT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISTS,

BUT MARXIST PROGRESSIVES WORKING IN A CONTEXT OF BUDDHISM AND NATIONALISM. THEIR PERSONAL INTEGRITY IN A CORRUPT SOCIETY PLUS THEIR COURAGE IN STANDING UP TO SIHANOUK GAINED THEM SIGNIFICANT LOCAL ADMIRATION DURING THE MID-60'S NEVERTHELESS THERE CONTINUES TO BE A LACK OF CONVINCING PROOF THAT THE MAN PURPORTING TO BE KHIEU SAMPHAN IS ALIVE.

3. IF THE PUTATIVE KHIEU SAMPHAN IS IN FACT ALIVE AND WELL (HIS PHOTOS VIA COMMUNIST SOURCES HAVE HIM APPEARING YOUNGER AND "PLUS BEAU" THAN REAL LIFE) THEN WE COULD ASSUME, BASED ON WHAT WE KNOW OF HIS PERSONALITY, THAT THE MAN WHO IS NOW BEING PUSHED FORWARD FALLS INTO A TITOIST MOLD BUT PROBABLY WITHOUT THE SUPREME INFLUENCE IN THE PARTY OF A TITO.

4. WE ALSO AGREE THAT DESPITE HIS TITLE OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF, KHIEU SAMPHAN PROBABLY HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH MILITARY ACTIVITIES ON THE TACTICAL LEVEL. CERTAINLY AT A CRUCIAL TIME IN THE DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE, A KEY MEMBER OF THE WAR STAFF WOULD NOT BE ABSENT. HOWEVER, THE NATURE OF THIS CURRENT TRIP COULD WELL HAVE BEEN INSURGENT NECESSITY TO DISCUSS AID REQUIREMENTS IN PEKING AND HANOI AS WELL AS TO PUT THE PATRONS OF THE INSURGENCY ON NOTICE THAT SIHANOUK IS NOT THE SUPREME LEADER. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS THIS IS WHERE OUR LACK OF PRECISE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INSURGENCY MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS AND IDENTIFY THE DECISION MAKERS.

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5. WE ARE AS YOU KNOW FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT MOST OF THE INSURGENT COMBAT BATTALIONS ARE COMMANDED BY THE BULK OF THE 6000-8000 VIETNAMESE-TRAINED KHMER CADRE TAKEN TO NVN IN 1954 AND RE-INTRODUCED IN 1970. IN MANY AREAS WHERE THERE WASN'T A KHMER ROUGE ORGANIZATION BEFORE 1970 (SUCH AS IN NORTHERN CAMBODIA OR EAST OF THE MEKONG WHICH THE NVA OVERRAN FOLLOWING THE ALLIED INCURSION OF MAY 1970) THE

VIETNAMESE TRAINED KHMER CADRE ALSO ESTABLISHED A VIET CONG TYPE POLITICAL STRUCTURE. HOWEVER, IN THE AREAS SUCH AS SOUTHEAST AND SOUTHWEST CAMBODIA WHERE THERE HAS BEEN A KHMER ROUGE ORGANIZATION SINCE THE 1940'S, WE COULD ASSUME THAT AT LEAST THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IF NOT THE MILITARY IS HEAVILY DOMINATED BY KHMER ROUGE WHO NOT ONLY HAD LITTLE TRAINING ABROAD BUT PROBABLY RESENT AND COMPETE WITH THE BETTER TRAINED MEN FROM NORTH VIETNAM. IT IS NOT HAPPENSTANCE THAT THERE IS SIGNIFICANT CONFLICT BETWEEN THE VC/NVA AND THE KHMER COMMUNISTS IN THESE AREAS OF SOUTHERN CAMBODIA SO CLOSE TO SVN.

6. CONVINCING ARGUMENTS CAN BE MADE THAT THE INSURGENCY IS LESS A CENTRALLY CONTROLLED COMMUNIST REBELLION AND MORE AN INSURGENCY WITH SEVERAL REGIONAL BASES. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY WHETHER ONE CAN GO SO FAR AS TO DESCRIBE IT AS WAR-LORDISM, BUT IT DOES SQUARE WITH CAMBODIAN TRADITION, AND THE NATURE OF THIS PARTICULAR WAR. A FACTIONALIZED INSURGENCY WITH A VENEER OF CENTRAL CONTROL DOES EXPLAIN CERTAIN PAST ANOMALIES IN INSURGENT OPERATIONS AND APPARENT CONFLICTS. THE INSURGENTS NO DOUBT HAVE A CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND IF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS AS ADVANCED AS IT SHOULD BE AFTER 25 YEARS OF EXISTENCE THERE PROBABLY IS A PRESIDUM MADE UP OF LITTLE KNOWN LEFTISTS SUCH AS SALOTH SAR, NUON CHEA, KOY THUON, NON SUON, AND MORE PROMINENT FRENCH TRAINED INDIVIDUALS SUCH AS KHIEU SAMPHAN, IENG SARY, SON SEN, HON YUON AND TO A LESSER EXTENT TIV OL AND PHUOK CHHAY. THESE MEN IN OUR VIEW WIELD THE REAL POWER. OTHER HAND MAIDENS SUCH AS CHAU SENG THIOUNN MUMM WHO ARE BASED OVERSEAS PROBABLY HAVE LITTLE STATURE DESPITE THEIR SERVICES TO THE CAUSE.

7. THE REAL MYSTERY IS THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL
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ORIENTATION OF THE INSURGENCY. ONLY GREATER DETAIL AS TO WHERE THE LEADERS SUCH AS KHIEU SAMPHAN HAVE SPENT THE INTERVENING YEARS BEFORE 1970 CAN GIVE US AN INDICATION OF WHETHER THEY ARE PRO-CHINA OR PRO-SOVIET IN THEIR PERSUASION. CERTAINLY THE PRC RECEPTION OF THE KHIEU SAMPHAN PARTY CAN BE VIEWED AS AN EFFORT TO COVER ALL BETS AND PRE-EMPT THEM FROM THE SOVIETS. (THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE HAS EXHIBITED TO US A DEGREE OF INTEREST IN THE INSURGENT LEADER). NEVERTHELESS, A TITOIST CAMBODIA WHICH IS INDEPENDENT AND DOCTRINAIRE WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO ITS NEIGHBORS AS A SANCTUARY FOR COMMUNIST REBELS. THE KHMER COMMUNISTS, SUCH AS SALOTH SAR, KOY THUON, AND KHIEU SAMPHAN ARE PROBABLY XENOPHOBIC BOTH WHEN IT COMES TO VIETNAMESE AND THE LOCAL CHINESE INHABITANTS. ONE OBJECTIVE OF A CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST REGIME WOULD

BE TO EXPEL OR SEVERELY CONTROL THESE GROUPS. SIHANOUK AT THE HELM WOULD PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY AS WELL AS CONTROL THE EXCESSES OF THE KHMER COMMUNIST ZEALOTS. IT SHOULD BE RECALLED THAT IN 1963 WHEN SIHANOUK OUSTED THE US AID MISSION AND NATIONALIZED THE BANKS AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM, HE DID SO AT THE URGING OF THE LEFTISTS HE WAS THEN COURTING, ONE OF WHOSE OBJECTIVES WAS AN EFFORT TO BREAK THE STRANGLEHOLD ON THE ECONOMY BY THE CHINESE COMMUNITY. THE EFFORT WAS OF COURSE DOOMED TO FAILURE DUE TO THE ABILITY OF THE CHINESE TO SUBORN CONSERVATIVE AND LEFTIST ALIKE.

8. FOR THE NEAR-TERM, WE DOUBT THAT EITHER THE INSURGENTS OR PEKING WILL JETTISON SIHANOUK BEFORE WINNING IN THE UNGA AS IT COULD COST THEM THE SUPPORT OF AFRICAN MODERATES SUCH AS LEOPOLD SENGHOR WHO BELIEVE SIHANOUK IS A PATRIOTIC NEUTRALIST OVERTHROWN BY A MILITARY JUNTA IN 1970.

9. WE CAN THEN EXPECT A CONTINUING THEME OF KHIEU SAMPHAN AND TROAPE DURING THIS TRIP TO BE NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY. THESE THEMES SHOULD GO OVER WELL IN THE THIRD WORLD WHERE, EXCEPT IN THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, IT WILL NOT BE REALIZED THAT THE LEADERS OF THE KHMER "LIBERATION" MOVEMENT ARE DEDICATED COMMUNISTS AND NOT AGRARIAN HEROES.

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